

MEETING REPORT NO. 05

PROJECT: **Town of Needham Downtown Study**

DATE: 06 December 2006

LOCATION: Community Room, Needham Public Library

PRESENT: Downtown Study Committee (DSC)

Kate Fitzpatrick	Town Manager
Jack Cogswell	Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Jerry Wasserman	Board of Selectmen
Bob Smart	Cochair, Planning Board
Moe Handel	Cochair, Planning Board
Lee Newman	Planning Director
Nicole Bourassa	Assistant Planner
Mark Gluesing	Design Review Board
Peter Fugere	Needham Housing Authority
Kathy Lewis	Needham Business Association
Paul Good	Chair, Needham Community Revitalization Committee
John Edgar	Economic Development Advisory Committee
John J. McQuillan	Business Owner
Bob Hentschel	Property Owner

DiNisco Design Partnership (DDP)

Kenneth DiNisco
Jon Oxman

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this meeting was to continue the review of existing conditions survey information and finalize plans for the Community Workshop (12/11/06).

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

- 2.1. The Existing Conditions Analysis was revised and expanded from the presentation at the last DSC meeting. This presentation will be used as part of the overview introduction at the Workshop. See the attached presentation. Comments included the following:
- 2.2. General comments – Titles and legends will be revised based on discussion. Major road names will be added. It was noted that on some plans, it is difficult to read the plans because some parcels are completely filled with buildings which have been rendered as solid black. Where appropriate the plans will be revised so that the buildings will be shown as an outline rather than as solid black. See Presentation attached to Meeting Report # 06 for revised plans.

- 2.3. Study Areas – This plan shows the Sub Study Areas. The categorization of the Sub Study Areas is based on current zoning districts. It was noted that one of the two discrete Chestnut Street Business Sub Study Areas, adjacent to the Needham Center Rail Station, may be more appropriately categorized as part of the Needham Center Sub Study Area.
 - 2.4. Study Area Limit – The Study Area Limit raised the issue of what area should be included in the study. Areas adjacent to the Study Area such as Greene's Field are of significance to the study. It was agreed that the Study Area limits, as originally determined, will be maintained and that adjacent areas of interest will be designated as "Areas of Influence". It was noted that most of the Area of Influence is to the east of the study area because the train tracks on the western edge of the Study Area are a logical stopping point for the study area.
 - 2.5. Zoning – As noted above the Sub Study Areas are based on existing zoning districts: Highland Avenue Business, Center Business and Chestnut Street Business. In addition there is a Medical Overlay District that overlaps part of the Chestnut Street Business District.
 - 2.6. Land Use – Existing Land Use was shown including the Area of Influence discussed above. A pie chart will be added to show the percentage of each type of land use. The large amount of public property (town, state and federal) in the Area of Influence skews the pie chart compared to the land use in the Study Area proper. It was agreed that the Existing Land Use would be shown both with and without the Area of Influence included.
 - 2.7. Ownership – Land Ownership identifies Owners controlling 1.5 acres or more. It was pointed out that Norstan Reality owns an additional parcel on Great Plain Avenue not shown in the plan. The plan will be corrected.
 - 2.8. Off –Street Parking – This plan is based on Needham GIS data. This plan indicates a significant amount of land in the Study Area is used for parking.
 - 2.9. Density – This plan was based on Needham GIS data for above ground finished area. It should be based on total finished area including basement area, but there is a problem working with the Needham GIS data set. This plan will be updated when the Needham GIS data set issue has been resolved.
3. COMMUNITY WORKSHOP (12/11/06)
- 3.1. Preparation and logistics for the Community Workshop were finalized.
 - 3.2. The agenda will include:
 - Introduction by Bob Smart
 - Overview of Study Objectives and Existing Conditions by Ken DiNisco
 - Breakout Sessions into small groups
 - Reporting back to entire group
 - Conclusions
 - 3.3. A draft list of questions for Community Workshop participants was reviewed. See attached memorandum. The questions will be revised into a handout for Workshop participants based on the discussion with DSC members.

- 3.4. Workshop materials will be uploaded to DDP's FTP site for DSC members to review prior to the Workshop. Paper copies of handout materials will also be available in the Planning Department office for DSC members.

4. NEXT MEETINGS

- 4.1. A DSC meeting has been scheduled at 6:30 PM Monday, December 11, 2006, to be held at the Broadmeadow School. This meeting, immediately before the Community Workshop, is for the purpose of reviewing Workshop materials and answering DSC member questions regarding facilitation of the Workshop.
- 4.2. A Community Workshop has been scheduled from 7:15 PM to 9:45 PM on Monday, December 11, 2006 to be held at the Broadmeadow School. The purpose of this workshop is to present to the community an overview of the Downtown Study and identify community goals for the Study Area.

The discussions of this meeting are recorded as understood by the writer. Please advise the writer of any omissions or corrections.



Jon Oxman AIA
DiNISCO DESIGN

JAO/

cc: DSC
Kenneth DiNisco
Richard Rice

Enclosure: 1. Presentation: DSC Meeting (12/06/06).
2. Memorandum: Draft List of Questions for Community Workshop (12/04/06).

Sub Study Areas

- HIGHLAND AVENUE BUSINESS
- NEEDHAM CENTER BUSINESS
- CHESTNUT STREET BUSINESS

Study Area Limit

- STUDY AREA
- ADJACENT PARCELS

Existing Zoning

- GENERAL RESIDENTIAL
- APARTMENT A - 1
- APARTMENT A - 2
- RURAL RESIDENCE CONSERVATION
- INSTITUTIONAL
- BUSINESS
- INDUSTRIAL
- INDUSTRIAL - 1
- EVERY SQUARE BUSINESS
- CENTER BUSINESS
- CHESTNUT STREET BUSINESS
- HIGHLAND AVENUE BUSINESS
- HILLSIDE AVENUES BUSINESS
- MIXED USE - 120
- NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS
- NEW ENGLAND BUSINESS CENTER
- MEDICAL OVERLAY

Existing Land Use

- MULTI-USE
- RESIDENTIAL
- NURSING HOME
- HOSPITAL
- RETAIL
- EATING & DRINKING
- SUPERMARKET
- OFFICE
- GOVERNMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- AUTO
- PARKING
- TRANSIT
- OTHER

Land Ownership



Off-Street Parking

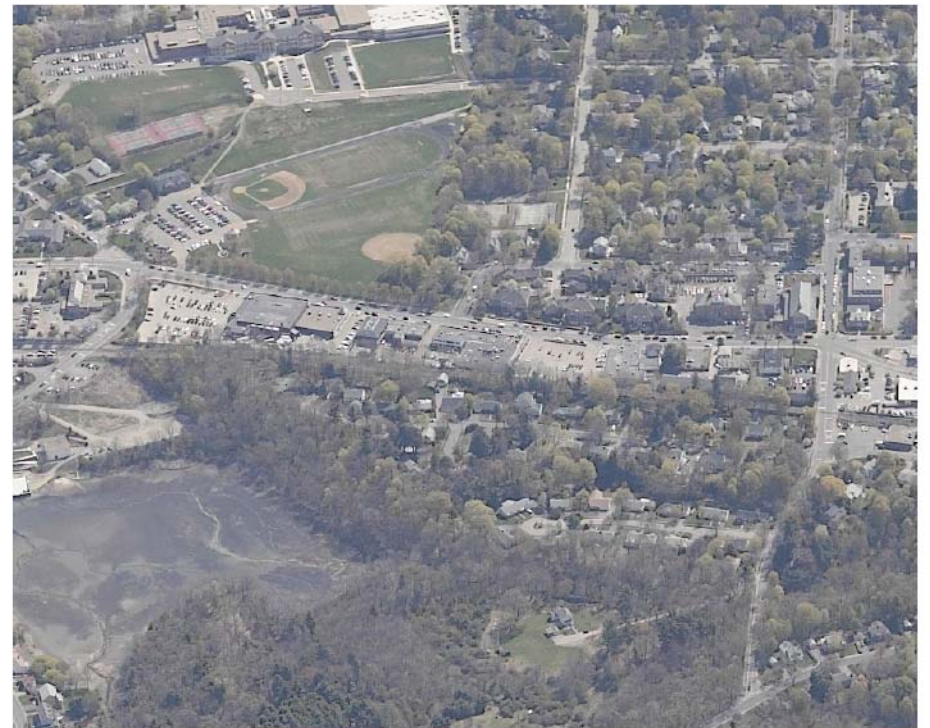
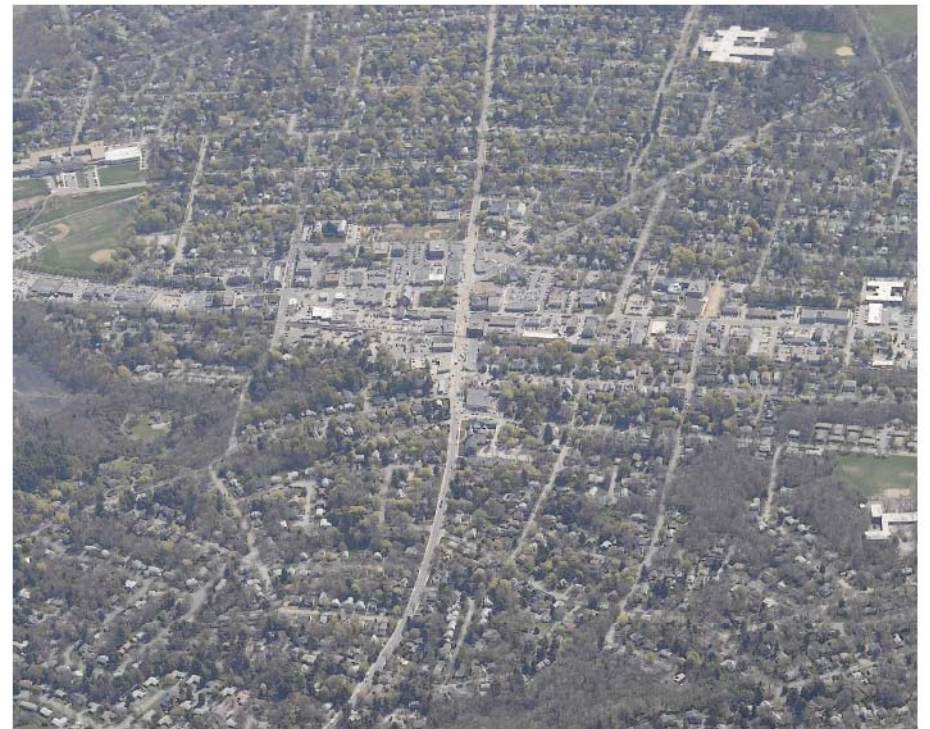
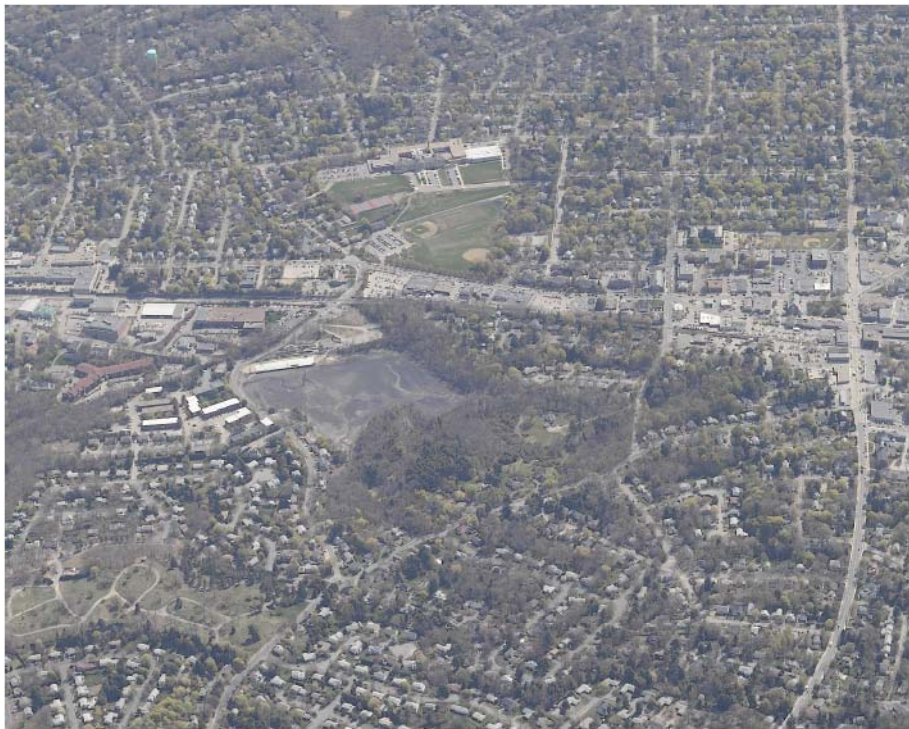


Density



Existing Conditions







Memorandum

Date: 04 December 2006
To: Downtown Study Committee (DSC)
From: Jon Oxman
Re: Needham Facilities Downtown Study
Subject: **DRAFT List of Questions for Community Workshop (12/11/06)**

I have prepared below a DRAFT handout to be distributed at the upcoming Community Workshop. The purpose of this handout is to solicit from Needham Downtown stakeholders their goals and objectives for the study.

This handout will be revised based on your comments at the DSC meeting this Wednesday 12/06/06.

Dear Needham Residents,

The Downtown Study Committee (DSC) is seeking public input from Needham Downtown stakeholders for formulating the Town's goals and objectives to improve Needham Center. We encourage participants to provide their comments and suggestions both during this workshop and afterwards via email c/o Lee Newman (LNewman@town.needham.ma.us).

The Vision Statement in the Community Development Plan, prepared for the Needham Planning Board in 2004, is a starting point for establishing the goals and objectives of the Downtown Study:

... a proactive planning process that carefully balances the need for economic development, encompassing residential and non-residential uses, with the preservation of key natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources.

We have outlined below a list of topics for your comments and suggestions.

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1.1. Please comment on the following goals and objectives for the economic development of Downtown, as articulated in previous studies:

- Increasing the tax base
- Increased job opportunities
- Convenient access to goods and services
- Enhancement of the appearance and character of the community

2. STUDY AREA

- 2.1. The study area is divided into three areas: Center Business District, Chestnut Business District and Highland Avenue Business District. What characteristics distinguish these districts from each other?

3. SENSE OF PLACE

- 3.1. What are significant assets or amenities within Downtown Needham? How can they be improved? What detracts from them?
- 3.2. What celebrations / activities would you like to see Downtown?
- 3.3. What features contribute to its present diversity?
- 3.4. What civic features would you like to be enhanced?
- 3.5. What recommendations would improve the quality of life for those who live, work and shop in downtown?

4. HOUSING

- 4.1. Please comment on the following goals established in the Community Development Plan for Housing:
- Encourage broad socio-economic diversity, especially for individuals who have or presently live in Needham.
 - Assurances that new housing is appropriate to its location and context

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

- 5.1. Unique opportunities for commuter rail exist at the four stations in Needham. What suggestions do you have for improving the use of these facilities for commuters, shoppers and residents?

6. RETAIL

- 6.1. What general suggestions can be made about retail shopping in Downtown Needham? Is there enough variety of shopping? If not, what is missing?
- 6.2. Is there too much of any retail business or inappropriate retail in the Downtown?

7. TRAFFIC

- 7.1. What problems are there with traffic Downtown?
- 7.2. What improvements in traffic would you like to see?

8. PARKING

- 8.1. What problems are there with parking in Downtown?
- Is there too much or too little parking?
 - What types of parking are needed
- 8.2. What types of parking are needed?
- Short term / Long term
 - Employee / Customer
- 8.3. What improvements would you like to see for parking Downtown?

9. PEDESTRIAN

- 9.1. What problems are there walking Downtown?
- 9.2. What improvements would you like to see?

10. STREETSCAPE / BUILT FORM

- 10.1. What are significant assets with regard to the Downtown streetscape? How can they be improved? What detracts from the Downtown streetscape?

11. ZONING

- 11.1. Are you aware of any development problems caused by the current Zoning Bylaw as it pertains to Downtown?
- 11.2. What improvements would you like to see in the development / zoning process?

12. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1. What criteria would you use to evaluate the success of the Downtown Study?

13. SHORT TERM GOALS

- 13.1. What short term improvements would you like to see Downtown?

14. OTHER COMMENTS

- 14.1. Other comments or suggestions.